Research Proposal of the Thesis Entitled

Consumer perception of conscious consumerism in the Garment supply chain

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree Of

Doctor of Philosophy

Under the guidance of

Dr. Promil Pande

In the

United World School of Design

KARNAVATI UNIVERSITY,

GUJARAT - 382422

January 2024

CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM IN THE GARMENT SUPPLY CHAIN

1. INTRODUCTION

Growing calls for transparency along with traceability practices in the fashion business are coming from both consumers as well as fashion organizations. Conscious consumerism is a trend that is here to stay. Hence, consumers are mindful of purchasing decision effects on socio-economic, and environmental areas. Both traceability in addition to transparency, are well-known issues that are crucial to preserve the environment and promote societal development. Transparent and traceable fashion supply chains have been demanded by customers, activists, and regulatory bodies to address issues like use of unsafe and hazardous substances, unethical labour practices, and environmental damage. Therefore, it seems that amalgamating transparency in the fashion supply network structure is essential for achieving sustainability. The research aims to explore links among fashion apparel consumers, manufacturers who practice transparent and traceable business practices, and people who work in garment industries such as professionals, consultants, and distributors in order to discover how these factors impact consumers' perception of conscious consumerism. The researcher suggests a mixed-methods strategy in this case, starting with secondary research based on a systematic literature evaluation of articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Surveying customers with an interest in fashion clothes and garment and textile industries is suggested as a quantitative method for gathering primary data. The secondary research through a literature review revealed the research gaps, which this research proposes to investigate and present with sustainability perspectives in the supply chain.

2. DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Supply chain is a term first introduced in 1982 by Keith Oliver, to create a single entity for a group of "disparate functions" in the management of a complex network of sourcing, production, marketing, distribution and other industry practices for improvement in customer service (Laseter and Oliver, 2003). Transparency in supply chains within the garment industry has a significant impact on sustainability that in turn influences consumer perception of conscious consumerism

and thus impacts their purchase decisions. The study therefore, inspects interconnections between transparent and traceable supply chains and the extent of its impact on conscious consumers. Furthermore, understanding the extent to which conscious consumers would actively seek information about a brand's sustainable garment supply chain practices, and how this information will influence their consumption choices.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are-

- Study current transparency and traceability practices within garment supply chains.
- Analyze consumer perceptions and the influence of conscious consumerism regarding transparency and traceability toward attaining sustainability.
- Understand the extent of information sharing necessary and its impact on conscious consumers.

4. IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH TOPIC

The Universal growth in consumption is the outcome of the swift expansion of the economy, which leads to excessive consumption and deteriorating the environment.

The public's concern over pollution, climate change, and the effects of deterioration in the environment has led to conscious consumerism, which aims to protect the environment. Retailers are noticing a rise in 'slow fashion' as consumers purchase more carefully, requiring them to embrace a customer-centered approach to sustainability. Thus, the study observes transparency practices and traceability approaches of the apparel supply chain to learn how consumers' opinions of these factors impact their purchase behavior. The study warrants attention and analysis in light of changing trends in consumer habits.

The secondary goal of the study is to detect how much data should be made available to the public. Furthermore, it would include motivations behind the purchase of apparel as well as the features that buyers wish to see in fashion products. The study will contribute to learning how consumer behavior is impacted by the effects of a transparent supply chain and will help understand the influence of a traceable supply chain on consumer behavior. Additionally, by shedding light on the

issues that lead to beliefs and behaviors to diverge, the outcome will help fashion companies enhance the supply chain network. The conclusions of the study will enable groundwork for further research shedding light on factors influencing customers' consumption practices of sustainable fashion.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed was in order to explore connection across consumer perception, transparency, traceability, sustainability, and conscious consumerism through the examination of secondary sources such as books, papers, and articles about garment supply chains and diverse approaches to consumer perception of conscious consumerism in the garment supply chain. These works will serve as the study's backdrop. Reviewing the literature, the following themes emerge to guide the study:

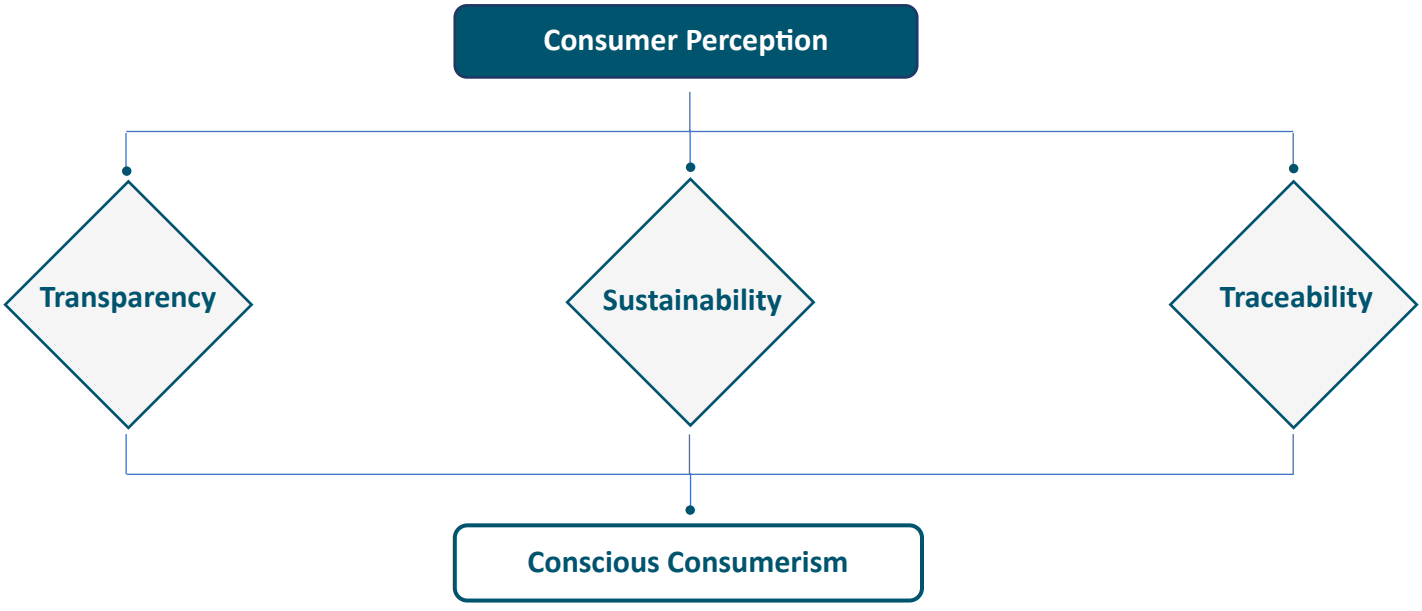

Figure 1: Thematic categorization of literature review

5.1 *Consumer Perception of the Garment Supply Chain*

Retailers notice a rise in "slow fashion" as consumers choose their purchases more carefully, focusing on quality timeless clothing and reducing the need for frequent purchases. Retailers must

therefore embrace a customer-centered approach to sustainability (Pookulangara & Shephard, 2013). The Brunt-Land report (1987) and WCED of the United Nations agreed on a definition of sustainability: "being able to satisfy current needs without compromising the possibility for future generations to satisfy their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) (United Nations, n.d.). As the fashion sector completely relies on human labor and is environmentally and socially conscious, hence industries in the sector have a responsibility to create a sustainable supply chain that considers all three dimensions of sustainability (Shen, 2014). The rapid increase in global consumption has induced swift expansion of the economy. The public's concern over pollution, climate change, and other environment issues has fueled the green movement, thus leading consumers to purchase environmentally friendly products. According to Makhdoomi, consumers are more influenced by their degree of satisfaction with a product when it comes to purchasing green items, rather than by demographic features. The features of environmentally friendly items mainly impact customer happiness and purchasing behavior (Makhdoomi & Nazir, 2016). The study aims to forward the conversion by recognizing the type and the amount of information that consumers need to better understand sustainability and ethics in fashion. James & Montgomery's study detects that certain obstacles impede the development of consumer awareness and understanding of ethical and sustainable frameworks. These include disinterested communication, increased connectivity, and the need for more instruments. In the study, the researcher suggests future methods of communication tactics that will allow customers to participate in transparent company practices (James & Montgomery, 2017). Sustainability and the so-called circular economy were the two main topics studied, together with the factors that ensure continuous competitiveness in this industry. From the consumer behavior standpoint, he observes that younger people are increasingly conscious of these issues. Considering these aspects, Gazzola investigates how ideas related to sustainability and the circular economy influence younger consumers' perceptions of the fashion business and how consumers perceptions of supply chains influenced intentions to visit further and refer items to others (Gazzola et al., 2020). The trial results of Gazzola's study demonstrated that customer views of sustainability have a favorable effect on word-of-mouth marketing. Ivaci's study further corroborates the importance of fashion companies focusing more on creating sustainable supply chains, maintaining information transparency, and disseminating it to the public (Ivaci, 2020). Consumer perceptions of sustainable business practices used by fashion brands, seemed to differ between the sexes. These differences

might influence how consumers behave when buying sustainable fashion items that can, therefore, assist the fashion industry in putting relevant strategies into practice (Mancdric et al., 2021). Participants' perceptions of fashion labels' sustainability were largely positive. Mandaric's study revealed a distinction between ethical understanding and actual choices and behaviors regarding apparel (Mandarić et al., 2022). Janki J (2022) asserts that consumers' behavior while purchasing durable, environmentally friendly products is influenced by their capacity to recognize problems with durable, non-green products (Janki J, 2022). Growing public and environmental concerns greatly influence consumers' purchase of environmentally friendly articles. Thus, more individuals are looking up information about long-lasting green items online from various sources, leading them to make a purchase. Encouraging positive post-purchase behavior, attained through satisfaction with green durable products, in turn, encourages sustainable practices in green durable products (Frederick, 2022). The depletion of natural resources, and the tiredness from constantly following trends, more designers, retailers, and customers are concentrating on a new trend called slow fashion, which values and cherishes fashion items rather than treating them disposable (Chomsky, 2023).

5.2 *Review of Transparency in the Garment Supply chain*

Long term strategy of supply chains rests on the premise of openness. It entails disclosing details about the sources, manufacturing procedures, and social, economic, and environmental properties of products honestly and openly (Linich, 2014). Over the past decade, the fashion industry has faced various challenges: unfavorable working conditions, environmental pollution, and shipment cancelation. Fashion companies are now striving to adopt best practices to reduce harmful repercussions on the environment through sustainable initiatives for instance, the Fashion Openness Index, which aims to boost industry-wide openness. Given the various social, economic, and environmental challenges plaguing the industry, it is vital to reflect on how both high-end and mainstream companies are responding to calls for transparency (Jestratijevic & Rudd, 2018). Transparency in garment supply chains therefore becomes essential for bringing responsibility and making them more apparent. Blockchain,a cutting-edge technology can enhance supply chain transparency and potentially solve our current problems, as reported based on Jordans' conversations with blockchain specialists and executives from the sustainable fashion and supply chain industries. A scholarly study, however, has not yet examined how BCT works or how helpful

it is for these kinds of objectives (Jordan et. Al., 2018). As per the Deloitte Press report, transparency in the supply chain goes beyond being able to see the entire supply chain (Bateman, 2019). "Transparency" is making information available to the public so that people may hold decision-makers to account. Maintaining supply chain openness requires companies to communicate internally and internationally about what's happening upstream in the chain. One reason the practice has become more important is that more and more clients are asking for it. For instance, research out of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management found that customers could be willing to pay an additional 2–10% for products made by businesses that provide more information about their supply chain (Harbert & MIT Sloan, 2020). The researcher provided an analysis of supply chain transparency and its relationship to sustainability as the focus of supply chain management research. Various dimensions of transparency have been discovered by the researcher: perspective, interested stakeholders, and sustainable supply chain information. Evaluation also revealed that the social component of sustainability has been the focus of research (Schäfer, 2021). The study's focus was to identify fashion consumer and fashion retailor relationship, it listed various barriers in increasing consumer awareness and understanding, for instance practicing dull communication technologies and poor connectivity, which impacts supply chain transparency and public awareness of a brand's corporate social responsibility. A lack of information on what people want, how they want it presented, and the most effective ways to communicate it exists (James & Montogomery, 2022). Disclosure choices in sustainability reporting transparency should inspire strategic thinking about fashion sector transparency (Jestratijevic, Uanhoro & Creighton, 2022).

Researchers aim to find common trends in company disclosure and develop approaches to build strategic ways for openness in sustainability reporting and assess progress towards increased transparency. According to Rabah improved knowledge did not necessarily result in major changes to the supply chain. The Fashion Transparency Index showcases the data that biggest Fashion brands in the world reveal about their supply chain practices and impacts (Rabah,2022). Transparency involves sharing information about industry supply chain procedures, manufacturing methods, and working conditions. By guaranteeing that customers, stakeholders, and retailers have access to thorough information about how products are manufactured and how these processes affect many elements including ethics, sustainability, and social responsibility, it seeks to maintain and encourage accountability (Zimmerman, 2022). At its foundation, transparency is

the ability to disclose to external parties the inner workings and choices of the company. It demonstrates to both present and potential customers that the business is transparent and has no ulterior objectives (Suryawanshi, 2023). Transparency matters as lack of transparency costs lives. Ten years ago, the Rana Plaza building collapsed in Bangladesh, killing and injuring thousands of workers (Hoskins, 2015). To determine which companies were producing clothes there, rescuers had to dig through to look for clothing labels to figure out which brands were producing clothes there. But so many years ago clothing industry remains complex, fragmented, and opaque. Poor visibility in the supply chain not only makes it difficult to identify who bears the responsibility but also fosters the growth of harmful labor practices and environmental harm (Fashion Transparrency Index , 2023).

5.3 *Review of Traceability in the Garment Supply Chain*

Utilizing a traceability system guarantees that all the items, components, materials, and services are monitored and tracked from the moment they are acquired by the business until they are distributed as finished goods (Guercini & Runfola, 2015). Thus, using technology for tracking and tracing a product from the point of purchase to its final destination is termed “traceability” (ITC, n.d.). This allows to determine potential obstacles and opportunities for visibility in the supply chain. Obster adopted a survey and business research to explore, “How can transparency and product traceability be enabled in the textile and clothing supply chain”. The conclusion was that there may be benefits to vertical integration, chains of study, and closer collaboration. The findings suggest that from the cotton field to the retail shelf, industries should foster communication and adopt a holistic view of their supply chain to make it transparent and traceable (Obster, 2015). The research delineates the key elements that an operational traceability system must highlight the various guidelines and stakeholders’ initiatives at different aspects of the supply chain. Implementing a unified traceability system is challenging due to the diverse objectives and elements involved (Richero & Ferrigno, 2016). According to ISO (9001:2015) traceability is the ability to recognize and follow the movement, origin, destination, and utilization of goods, components, and services. The business also needs to know the product’s specifications, composition, and information about the suppliers and manufacturers. Consumers also should be informed about product sustainability, composition, and location of origin. The study’s result might help in developing a framework for information traceability.

Senior management and legislators can set and create plans about traceability standards using the guidelines or findings. Traceability 1.0 results in increased productivity and efficiency. Traceability 2.0 enhances product quality, safety, regulatory compliance, and summary inventory management. Programs designed to prevent counterfeiting as well as those that optimize component and product compatibility depend on traceability 3.0. At the same time, the 4 M's (Material, Machine, Man, Method) are achieved by traceability 4.0, which also incorporates AI into some aspects of process management while maximizing overall production effectiveness and brand protection (Agrawal & Pal, 2019). Due to the pervasive and life-threatening nature of environmental concerns, corporate organizations must play a role in promoting environmentally sustainable organizational performance. Hence, it is essential to have traceable information. This is particularly true when considering coordination theory. In light of Sri Lankan businesses that have taken environmental compliance certifications as a sign of their commitment to sustainability, Patabandige looked into how transparent information, which is both traceable and visible, can guarantee environmental performance (Galahitiyawe & Patabandige, 2020). Tools for traceability are essential for ensuring accountability and openness throughout the supply chain allowing retailers to monitor and manage the sourcing, production, shipping, and storage of items (Zose, 2020). Customers often struggle in finding information that supports product authenticity or promotes ethical buying. In a challenging environment wherein, data can be manipulated stakeholders fear losing their information advantage, making it difficult for them to share crucial information. Hence, in a case study, authors Agrawal, Kumar, Pal et. al. (2021) propose a multi-tiered blockchain-based system to track the garment supply chain within its paradigm. Traceability in the supply chain therefore is a crucial issue for legislators, regulators, and various economic sectors. The present social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by the textile and garment industry lead to the necessity of effective traceability solutions. Consequently, the two interconnected traceability objectives that emerge can achieve a sustainable supply chain and product authentication (Ahmed & MacCarthy, 2021). According to Guercini and Rulfola (2015), a product's entire lifecycle can be tracked through traceability, which allows one to understand the origins of each component of an article of clothing and follow each stage, or tier, of the supply chain. This covers everything from the place of origin and procurement of raw materials to the hands of the final consumer and any end-of-life activities, like recycling or reselling. Because of this, the concept of product and process traceability in business has developed into a multi-faced

notion involving the sharing of data pertaining to these topics from the point of origin in B.T.B. networks to the final customers in the market (Alexander, 2023).

5.4 *Review of Sustainability in the Garment Supply Chain*

According to Brutland's review (1987), developing nations are the driving force behind the push for sustainability, and this movement aims to address their requirements. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to sustain themselves (Al-athel et. al., 1987). According to Ben Purvis, Yong Mao, and Darren Robinso, sustainability uses three interrelated "pillars" that include social, economic, and environmental (Purvis et. al., 2018). Even customers are prepared to shell out more money for transparency: 78% of consumers want to make more sustainable decisions and would pay more for products developed locally, sustainably, or with recycled materials, according to the 2023 PwC Global Consumer Insights Survey. However, over half of these customers must believe or comprehend what businesses say about the environment (pwc, 2023).

There are three interrelated "pillars" that make up the definition of "sustainability"; these include monetary, social, and ecological (or ecological) considerations or "objectives" (Purvis et al, 2018). Additionally, there is no one source from whence it originates, therefore the conceptual underpinnings still require clarification.

Pillar I- Outside of Marxist theory, the term "economic development" came to mean more generalized improvements in material conditions, such as higher per capita income and more trade in goods and services, rather than the direct colonial plunder of natural resources (HW, 1981). The postwar economic boom has raised living standards across the West. The acute inequality and chronic poverty that plague many of these nations, however, quickly came to the fore (Hicks & Streeten, 1979). Thus, a second major counter-discourse in development literature argued that we should stop seeing development as an aim in itself and start seeing it as a means to a socially conscious and "basic needs" approach (Sapkota & Tharu, 2016). According to Arndt, the earliest famous example was "The Meaning of Development" by Seers (Arndt, 1987). In 1978, Ignacy Sachs described eco-development as "an approach to development that calls for another kind of qualitative growth which aims to harmonize social and economic objectives with ecologically sound management, in a spirit of solidarity with future generations" (Purvis et al, 2018). In 1972, the environmental pillar was termed “environmentally and sound development” or “ecodevelopment” at the United Nation conference in Stockholm. According to Ignacy Sachs eco-

development is defined as an approach that integrates social and economic goals with ecologically responsible management (1978). He also advocated for a different type of qualitative growth" (Sach, 1978; Glaeser, 1984; Purvis et al, 2018).

Pillar II- During the 1960s and 1970s, the environmental movement gained momentum in the West. Publications such as "Silent Spring" (1962), "The Population Bomb" (1968), and "A Blueprint for survival" (1972) heightened public awareness by covering environmental disasters and the extent of environmental destruction caused by humans. Along with this, works like "Limits of Growth" (1972) and "Small is Beautiful" (1973) argued that the modern growth-based economy was unsustainable and this perspective became more prominent following the 1973 Oil crises and ensuing global recession (Purvis et al, 2018).

Pillar III- By 1980, the momentum of radical social movement had broken, causing early environmental movements to lose their dive (Heijden, 2007). Under the concept of sustainable development, the ecological and social critiques of economic development began to collide (O'Riordan, 1985). The principles upholding equality and individual rights define the social pillar of a company's sustainable development. It centers on the role that supply chain sustainability enables a company to support its various stakeholders, including workers, suppliers, consumers, shareholders, regulators, and the general public.

Typically, the environmental pillar receives the most significant focus. Reducing water use, packaging waste, carbon footprints, and other environmental harm is a top priority for many businesses; the economic pillar, on the other hand, focuses on how the supply chain's sustainability contributes to the company's long-term profitability (Safdie, 2023)**.** Due to economic, social, and environmental challenges in developing nations, Duygu Turker & Altuntas' research explores how fast fashion companies are prioritizing sustainability while striving to maintain consistent quality in the production environment across the supply chain (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). It also examines implementation of Sustainable supply chains within fashion industries whereby reports of nine companies within the industry were analysed including Calida, Marimeko, Mango, C&A, H&M, and others. The paradigm proposed by Seuring and Müller (2008), in the form of a conceptual map, enables auditing, monitoring, and compliance tasks essential to sustainable supply chain management (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). She Chen (2018) investigates the impact NGO inspections have on supply chain sustainability through a model that helps analyze the relationship between the decisions made by buyers, NGOs, and suppliers concerning the optimal level of auditing and

compliance efforts. It outlines the circumstances under which buyers' and NGOs' auditing efforts may be substituted. Future research direction should take into account consumer preferences as many buyers seek to utilize product-related information to make informed shopping decisions (Chen et. al., 2018). As consumer demand for sustainable practices grows, fashion firms have persistently explored various avenues for innovating and embracing the supply chain. Based on the review of literature and interviews, the study introduces a model outlining how the fashion supply chain can uphold its efficiency while integrating sustainable practices (Pal et. al., 2019). The studies examine the range of associated outcomes, such as socio-economic and environmental hotspots, including the prominence of different supply chain stages in specific effects (Swink, 2018; United Nations Environment Programme). To further this agenda UNEP will continue to collaborate with authorities, organizations, and stakeholders. The next stage is to conduct a more detailed examination of selected activities to develop a roadmap that outlines how and by whom these actions should be managed to take a step towards a more circular supply chain (Notten, 2020). The fashion industry has faced severe criticism for the way it manages supply chain networks. Merchants and owners have desired greater transparency, but the practical method of achieving it is lacking. However, with the introduction of Tex.tracer, significant progress has been made in the supply chain platform. This platform helps brand owners to access product history by scanning QR. As a result, brand owners now have a better understanding of supply chain networks and are set to meet the new requirements but this process is only applicable to organic cotton fibers (Westerman et. al., 2021). Studies have examined SSCM by analyzing sustainability reports of fast fashion brands such as Everlane and H&M observing the lack of involvement of upstream and downstream stakeholders in the plans. To mitigate impact on the environment, increased brand engagement with suppliers and customers, backing long-term decarbonization, energy infrastructure, and evaluating product design standards could significantly lower the environmental impact. However, the major challenge is implementing the changes in view of the lack of standards and regulations governing sustainability reports (Wren, 2022).

5.5 *Review on Fashion Supply chain in relation to conscious consumerism*

Michaela and Orna (2015) argue that fashion conscious consumers are an influential segment and are customers that are heavily influenced by social media buyer reviews. A negative comment whereby can deter them from making a particular choice (Michaela and Orna, 2015). The

objectives of the study conducted by Gupta (2018) on the Psychographic analysis of environment-conscious consumer identifies the relevant psychographic characteristics of environmentally conscious customers and investigates how these characteristics connect to their attitudes and behaviors. Thus, there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between materialism and environmental consciousness in consumer behavior (Gupta, 2018).

The study conducted by Bernard & Parker on the effect of conscious consumerism investigated the behavior of consumers regarding green consumption and how the cosmetic industry adopts greenwashing to influence consumer decisions to purchase products. Thus, identifying a statistically crucial inverse correlation between materialism and environmental consciousness in consumer behavior. Additionally, a cross-cultural study among different countries sheds light on how cultural background might affect the creation of environmentally friendly client profiles. Receiving opinions from customers on the same subject in different countries reveals both similarities and differences influenced by their backgrounds. The findings demonstrated the three critical barriers that affect buying content in the cosmetic industry; social influence on consumers' willingness to embrace sustainability, the significance of quality and performance of products, and the contribution of education in sensitization. Additionally, there are four barriers that hinder consumers from opting for green shopping habits: financial constraints, convenience issues, lack of knowledge, and consumer skepticism (Bernard & Parker, 2021). Raut & Pendse are examining the next generation's attitudes and behavior towards deliberate utilization of sustainable products. The findings demonstrate that thoughtful consumption improves the quality of life for the youth in connection of environment, economy & society. It depicts the young generation’s conscious awareness of the need to protect the environment, themselves, and future generations (Raut & Pendse, 2023).

The fashion industry's supply chain manages the movement of items from raw materials to finished goods and delivery to customers. Key stages of the supply chain include planning, sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, and returns (Fernando, 2024). Fashion Industry supply chain varies based on customer demand, market conditions, and retailer’s slants (Sampson, 2023). Whereas, a typical supply chain is represented in the below flow chart (Fig: 2).

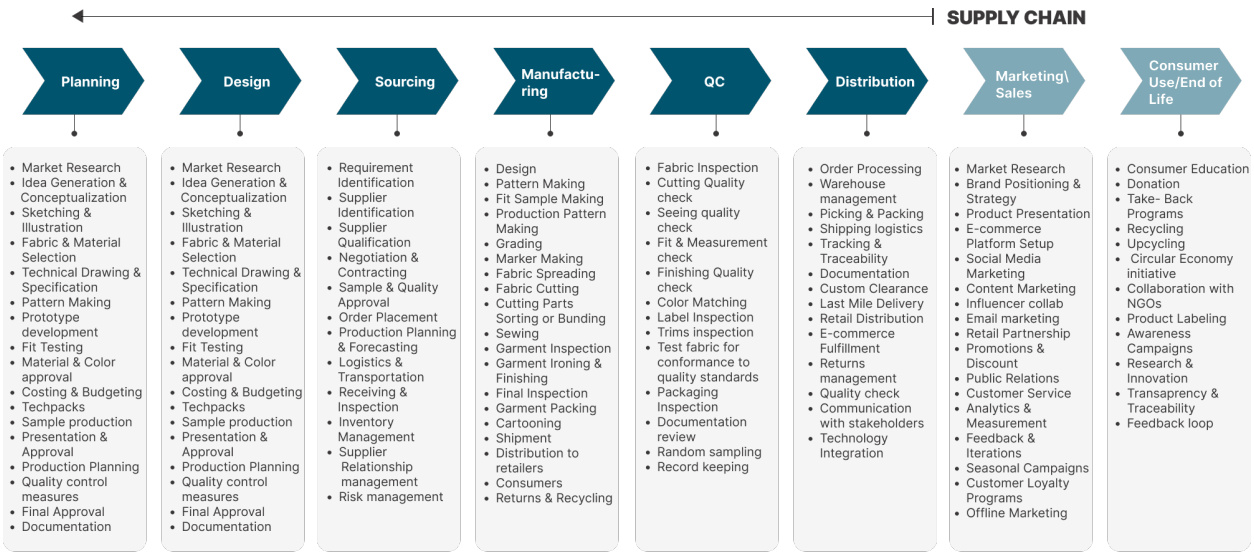

Figure 2: Garment Supply chain (Sampson, 2023)

In the mid-market segment, where retailers are responding to downward pressure on prices by moving production globally, including to recently emerging markets, the vertical integration strategy is unusual. Hence, by concentrating on their core competencies of design, branding, and retailing, retailers and brands are moving more and more towards a design/source/distribute model, with the production function being outsourced to independent suppliers, as shown in Figure 3 (Perry et. al., 2015)

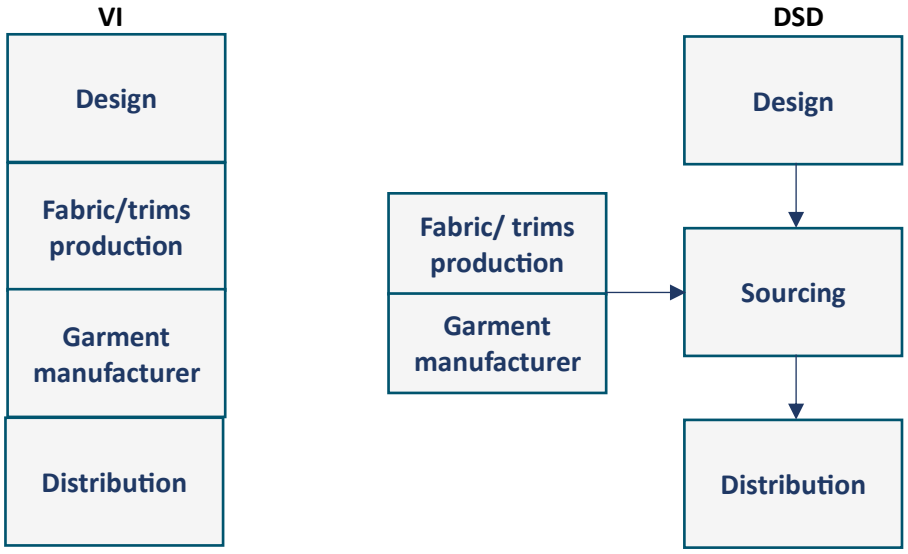

Figure 3: Supply chain models in the fashion industry - vertical integration (VI) and design/ source/ distribute (DSD) (Perry et. al., 2015)

Research Gaps

1. There is limited research on the connections between supply chain traceability and sustainability concepts, hence it is necessary to ascertain it.
2. It remains uncertain whether traceability and transparency in the garment supply chain will positively or negatively impact consumer perception of conscious consumerism.
3. There is a gap in knowledge regarding the kind of details that will foster increased commitment towards ethical and sustainable issues.
4. There is a potential gap in exploring how well sustainable practices are integrated into the garment supply chain and how consumers perceive and respond to these practices.
5. The industry must address the barriers to transparency to ensure that stakeholders have access to critical information about corporate practices and its impacts.
6. Traceability and transparency are concepts that are still not fully utilized in the fashion supply chain, despite their numerous benefits. The literature review identified several key barriers: a shortage of cost-effective technologies, insufficient information, consensus among people working in the fashion industry about the rewards of a traceability system, and a lack of clearly defined rules and policies.
7. While consumer willingness to pay for sustainable products is noted, the direct correlation between transparency/traceability initiatives and changes in consumer purchasing behavior is not deeply analyzed.
8. Traceability systems have been developed for the food industry. The production process of garments is more complicated though. The traceability system needs to account for the wide range of processes and transformations within the garment supply chain.
9. How companies communicate their efforts towards transparency might be an area that needs further investigation, including the effectiveness of different communication strategies.
10. Existing studies may focus more on immediate consumer perceptions, and there might be a gap in understanding the long-term impact of conscious consumerism on the garment supply chain.
11. No thorough discussion of how documenting and sharing specific information might influence traceability.

6. Research Methodology

The study will employ a mixed-methods approach. This research proposes to use primary and secondary research methods to investigate consumer perception of conscious consumerism in the Garment supply chain in Rajasthan, India. The study will collaborate with tools such as customer survey analysis and secondary research.

A customer survey analysis of the primary data will be conducted to understand factors influencing consumer perception of conscious consumerism.

Respondents will be accessed through open-ended and Likert scale questionnaires to appropriately reflect the mediation relationship of S.C.M. between sustainability and transparency.

6.1 Sources of Data

6.1.1 Secondary Data

Literature will be reviewed systematically to enable collection of secondary data from publications, journals, books, articles, and development corporations, enabling a foundational understanding of the problem areas in the fashion supply chain system.

6.1.2 Primary Data

Garment manufacturing happens in every state of India. While some concentrate on the domestic market, others prioritize exports. The availability of skilled labor and the existence of a supply chain (fabrics, accessories, dyeing facilities, etc.) in the area are key success factors for the industry.

Below (Figure 4) are some of the best places in the nation to manufacture clothing:

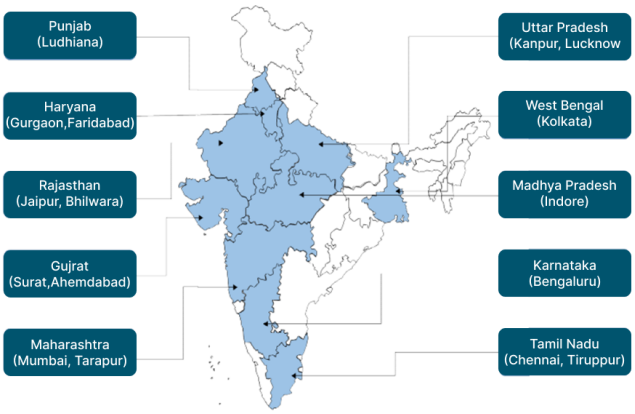

Figure 4: India's Key Garment Manufacturing Regions (Verma, 2021)

The study will employ a mixed method approach to qualitative interviews to gather primary data from 50 fashion and textile companies situated in the Rajasthan region as shown in Fig: 4 The quantitative study will utilize methodological tools such as questionnaires designed and distributed to the respondents online and offline. Respondents will be accessed through open-ended multiple choice grid questions and a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to appropriately reflect the mediation relationship of S.C.M. between sustainability and transparency. Because of time and budget constraints, a limited sample size will be used to gather information.

6.2 Sampling Plan

Respondents will be selected using non-probability convenience sampling rather than random sampling. However, selection criteria will depend on accessibility of the respondents and their willingness to partake.

6.3 Field Work

The fieldwork will incorporate personal interviews with participants wherever possible, in addition to telephonic interviews. The survey will be conducted in and will be limited to regions of Rajasthan. The survey questions will be coded, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted according to tabulated results.

6.4 Data collection

The study will employ interviews, observation, and discussion as some of the methods for which questionnaires, photographs and recordings will be the tools and techniques adopted. The questionnaire will be distributed to participants to enable evaluation of prevalence, knowledge, implementation and effectiveness of transparent and traceable practices within the supply chain. Respondents will be accessed through open-ended, multiple choice grid questions and a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to appropriately reflect the consumer purchase decisions and conscious consumerism. A structured questionnaire will be distributed via email, to aid in data collection.

6.5 Research Design

The current study will employ a participatory research (PR) approach. PR is defined as a term for research designs, approaches, methodologies, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in close

collaboration with people impacted by the issue being studied in order to bring out action or change (Cargo & Mercer, 2018). This research can be explained as a study that involves the active involvement of stakeholders, including end users in the design process. The research will aim to incorporate the perspectives and insights of those who will be affected by the result. This type of research includes a mixed method approach, by answering the queries such as who, when, what, how, and where to gather insights from existing literature, fashion-inclined customers along with stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the problem area.

An alternative strategy involves using the SOR model involving use of three structures (Stimulus, organism, and response) to gauge behavior. In this model, stimulus and response are "parts of behavior and environment." Abrupt environmental changes can impact the emotional stability of individual psychology leading to behavioral shifts. Stimulus is an extraneous force that guides individual's; it is defined as "influencing the individual" (Fu et. al., 2020).

Figure 5: SOR Model

6.6 ***Intended Population and Size of Sample:*** Segment of consumers inclined toward fashion apparel and people who work in the garment industries such as professionals, academics, consultants, and manufacturers and distributors will be the intended population referred as target population considered for the study. The sample size would be 50 companies located in Rajasthan.

7. Analysis of information

The researcher will employ an amalgamation of analysis techniques. The collection of Primary data will be done through a survey method by way of distribution of semi-structured questionnaires. Secondary data will be gathered and analyzed via a literature review of peer-reviewed research publications. Statistical methods will be utilized for analysis of the acquired data. A value chain analysis will be undertaken to carry out assessment across stages, offering an assessment of the existing situation along with recommending suitable alternatives. The findings will then incorporate descriptive and narrative modes for discussion.

8. Limitations and Key Assumptions

The research has theoretical and practical implications, but it has limits. The literature review covers articles and publications published between the years 1979 to 2023. The selection process omitted the papers written in other languages except English on topics related to transparency, traceability, fashion supply chain, conscious consumerism, and sustainability. This results in the omission of significant studies which were conducted in other languages. Research was limited as either they did not fall within the scope of study or lacked focus in relevance with stakeholders, policies, regulations, technical advances, marketing, and management. However, the data and findings from this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by building a theoretical framework, the constraints therefore will serve as a foundation for future study.

Reference List

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